

Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM NIACT IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T STATE 259357

FOLLOWING REPEAT CAIRO 9495 SENT ACTION SECSTATE

INFO TUNIS THE HAGUE BAGHDAD LONDON ALGIERS

BEIRUT RABAT TRIPOLI, NOVEMBER 24TH:

QUOTE S E C R E T CAIRO 9495

DEPT PASS SECRETARY

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR PINS EG SF OGEN

SUBJ: HIJACKED VC-10

REF: TUNIS 7233

1. REFTTEL JUST RECEIVED (1000 GMT). CONSENSUS AMONG DIPLOMATIC CORPS IN TUNIS NOTWITHSTANDING, SIRRI HAS JUST AGAIN ASSURED ME THAT THE KHARTOUM EIGHT ARE IN CAIRO AND WILL NOT RPT NOT BE RELEASED. LATEST MFA REPORTS AS OF TWO HOURS AGO SUGGESTED SITUATION SHOULD BE RESOLVED IN AN HOUR OR TWO. DETAILS WERE BEING DISCUSSED RE EXCHANGE OF CREWS. AT THE TIME OF MY CALL, SIRRI SAID HE WAS TRYING TO GET THROUGH TO TUNIS BY PHONE TO ASCERTAIN LATEST NEWS.

2. UK AMBASSADOR ADAMS SAYSHIS UNDERSTANDING IS THERE CONTINUES TO BE HEAVY PRESSURE ON PRESIDENT SADAT TO RELEASE
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THE KHARTOUM EIGHT. BOUMEDIENNE, FRAGIYA, BOURGUIBA AND

OTHERS ARE STILL URGING HIM TO DO SO. WHILE ADAMS NOTES GOE PUBLIC STATMENT THAT SADAT AGREED TO RELEASE ROME FIVE "ON AN EXCEPTIONAL BASIS," HE WONDERS IF PRESIDENT MAY BE VACILLATING UNDER THIS INTENSE PRESSURE. ADAMS CONCEDES HE HAS NO EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT HIS SPECULATION. HE CALLED BACK A FEW MINUTES AGO (1100 GMT) TO RELATE LONDON HAS NOW INFORMED HIM THAT DEAL IS SEVEN TERRORISTS (ROME FIVE AND TWO RELEASED BY DUTCH) WILL BE FLOWN TO AN UNDISCLOSED DESTINATION THIS AFTERNOON, WHILE KHARTOUM EIGHT ARE TO BE RELEASED IN CAIRO. THIS IS NOT RPT NOT CONSISTENT WITH SIRRI'S ASSURANCES OF AN HOUR AGO (PARA 1 ABOVE); THOUGH GOE COULD OF COURSE CONTEND TIMING IS FOR IT TO DECIDE AND CONTINUE TO HOLD THESE PEOPLE. THIS WOULD BE IN ACCORD WITH ITS OFT STATED POSITION ON THE SUBJECT.

3. ACCORDING ADAMS' INFORMATION, DUTCH GOVERNMENT HAS STIPULATED THAT THE TWO PALESTINIANS IT IS PREPARED TO RELEASE ARE TO REMAIN IN DUTCH AIRCRAFT UNDER GUARD UNTIL SUCH TIME AS ALL OF THE HOSTAGES ARE RELEASED. ADAMS ALSO UNDERSTANDS THERE WILL BE SEPARATE NEGOTIATIONS FOR EXCHANGE OF CREWS.

4. COMMENT: WHILE FAHMY, IN HIS TELECON WITH ME LAST NIGHT, MADE MUCH OF ABU IYAD'S RELIABILITY AS A NEGOTIATOR BECAUSE "HE KNOWS HOW TO DEAL WITH THESE PEOPLE," AN UNDERCURRENT OF EGYPTIAN DISTRUST CLEARLY EXISTS. AS REPORTED ELSEWHERE TODAY'S CAIRO PRESS SPEAKS OF ABU IYAD'S FAILURE. SIRRI COMMENTED LAST NIGHT WITH SOME BITTERNESS THAT BU IYAD HAD OFFERED "COMPROMISE" FORMULA INVOLVING RELEASE OF ROME FIVE AND THEN TOLD EGYPTIANS THIS WAS ONLY HOPE OF RESOLVING ISSUE. EGYPTIANS KNOW THAT, HOWEVER CRITICAL ABU IYAD AND PLO MAY PROFESS TO BE ABOUT ABU MAHMOUD AND ABU NIDAL GROUP, THEY SHARE THE LATTER'S OBJECTIVE OF PERSUADING SADAT TO RELEASE ALL THE CAIRO-HELD TERRORISTS. THUS, THEY SUSPECT ABU IYAD MAY HAVE A DIVIDED LOYALTY IN THIS NEGOTIATION AND REMAIN UNEASY ABOUT WHAT HE MAY YET PROPOSE. HOWEVER, CONSISTENT WITH EGYPTIAN POSITION THAT INTERNECINE PALESTINIAN DISSIDENTS SHOULD BE HANDLED BY PLO AS SOLE REPRESENTATIVE OF PALESTINIANS, THEY HAVE CONSIDERED IF PRODENT TO UTILIZE ABU IYAD AND A FEW OF HIS PLO ASSOCIATES RATHER THAN ENGAGE THEMSELVES DIRECTLY IN THE NEGOTIATION.

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